"What shalt thou do when thou hast an english to make into Latin?": The Proverb Collection of Cambridge, St. John's College, MS F.26

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Source: *Studies in Philology*, Winter, 2015, Vol. 112, No. 1 (Winter, 2015), pp. 68-92

Published by: University of North Carolina Press

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/24392048

"What shalt thou do when thou hast an english to make into Latin?": The Proverb Collection of Cambridge, St. John's College, MS F.26

by Joanna Bellis and Venetia Bridges

This article considers proverbs used as translation sentences, in the context of the teaching of Latin in the medieval schoolroom. Its enquiry focuses in particular on one folio of such latinitates, *in Cambridge, St. John's College, MS F.26 (with further discussion of Cambridge, University Library MS Additional 2830). Its argument concerns, first, the question of what happens to the nature of proverbial wisdom when modulated from the (supposedly) oral, vernacular, folk context of its primary application, to the secondary (supposedly) written, Latinate, authoritative context of the classroom; when common, workaday wisdom shares the pedagogical page with Cato. Second, it extrapolates from this example to trouble the assumptions that still cling so tenaciously to this linguistic binary, arguing that presuppositions that Latin was not oral, vernacular, or homespun, or conversely that English was not written, authoritative, or bookish, are spurious. Finally, it considers the same proverbs that appear here as translation sentences when they are incorporated elsewhere into poetry, pondering the comparable ways in which that genre used them to construct authority, vernacularity, and orality.*

THE use of proverbs as pedagogical translation exercises was a common practice in the Middle Ages: the proverb collection that made up the *Distichs of Cato* (the first part of the *Liber Catonianis*) remained the first text in the Latin reader for over a thousand years. However, alongside this canonical repertory of Latin wisdom jostled popular proverbs. Translation sentences harvested from the vernacu-

lar repertoire featured beside the *Distichs* in English grammar books from the thirteenth century; and by the early fifteenth, both *english* and *latin* (or alternatively *vulgus/vulgar* and *latinitas*) appear as free-standing nouns: the comment "a hard latin to make, my face waxeth black" appears in Oxford, Lincoln College, MS LAT 129 (E), f. 94^{v};[1] and the early sixteenth-century schoolmaster John Leland, coining the equivalent noun *english*, posed the question that gives this article its title, "what shalt thou do when thou hast an english to make into Latin?"[2] In his study of these *latinitates* in medieval schoolbooks, Nicholas Orme comments that "by the middle of the fourteenth century, they were evidently a standard feature of Latin grammar teaching": "The teachers, presumably, expounded or dictated the sentences, and the pupils memorized them or wrote them down."[3]

A number of factors made vernacular proverbs popular choices for Latin translation sentences, such as their brevity, grammatical simplicity, and tried-and-tested memorability. The eleventh-century schoolmaster Egbert of Liège explained his methodology for setting such "empty jingles" as *latinitates*, in the preface to the *Fecunda Ratis*:

Dum absentibus interdum preceptoribus illa manus inpuberam quasdam inter se (nullus tamen in re) nenias aggarriret uti in his exercendis et crebro cantandis uersiculis ingeniolum quodammodo acueret, tum istis potius uteretur.

[When the teachers are from time to time absent, and the group of boys babble empty jingles among themselves, as if they would sharpen their wits by the recitation of these chants, then they should make use of these instead.][4]

Just as the systematic use of the *Liber Catonianis* over a millennium ensured that its maxims, painstakingly memorized from their schoolbooks by generations of schoolboys, became (as Jill Mann writes) "part of everyone's mental furniture,"[5] so in reverse, proverbs that originated

[1] Cited by Nicholas Orme, *Education and Society in Medieval and Renaissance England* (London: Hambledon, 1989), 76.

[2] See David Thomson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Middle English Grammatical Texts* (New York: Garland, 1979), 288.

[3] Orme, "Latin and English Sentences in Fifteenth-Century Schoolbooks," *The Yale University Library Gazette* 60 (1985): 47. This article offers a good overview of the pedagogical tradition and terminology of *latinitates* (set sentences and exercises as well as proverbs) and a transcription of the collection of Beinecke Library, MS 3 (34), fol. 5.

[4] Egbert of Liège, *Egberts vön Luttich Fecunda Ratis*, ed. Ernst Voigt (Halle: Niemeyer, 1889), 2; trans. Jill Mann, "'He knew nat Catoun': Medieval School-Texts and Middle English Literature," in *The Text in the Community*, ed. Jill Mann and Maura Nolan (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 52.

[5] Mann, "'He knew nat Catoun,'" 55.

in an oral context found their way, through an opposite process of transition and translation, into the written tradition.

The first argument that this article offers concerns the way in which vernacular proverbial wisdom was modulated as it moved from common parlance into the pedagogical tradition: as it was recontextualized from the demotic to the authoritative, the oral to the written. The power of spoken proverbs derived precisely from their orality: acoustic or mnemonic features such as meter, rhyme, and alliteration, became (to differing degrees) redundant when read rather than said, let alone translated. Their idiolect was lost. Yet simultaneously they were invested with different contextual weight: placed alongside authoritative pedagogical proverb collections like the *Distichs*, they became learned wisdom rather than folklore: anthologized, collected, studied, and preserved.

However, the second and more fundamental purpose of this article is to trouble the binary between English and Latin, and rethink the axis that still often governs their conceptualization: the assumption that the *english* is by nature vernacular, oral, and demotic, and the *latin*, inevitably written, learned, and authoritative. It is worth recalling that Latin was a language that was heard as much as seen; in schools, in universities, in monasteries, and in ecclesiastical circles, it was a crucial medium of spoken communication for the greater part of the Middle Ages.[6] Moreover, Latin "tags" shared a common ground with vernacular proverbial wisdom, as demonstrated by examples of *sententiae*. The twelfth-century poet Walter of Châtillon composed satirical verses that contain famous quotations from classical *auctores* entirely removed from their original context and repositioned within poetry probably recited around the Feast of Fools.[7] These quotations operate in a similar fashion to vernacular proverbs: they were intended to be heard rather than read and to be recognized on account of their clichéd familiarity (rather like Shakespeare's "to be or not to be"). Such instances (and Walter's poems were copied many times between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries)

[6] Thomas Becket's skill (or lack thereof) in speaking Latin was commented on by his contemporaries: see Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), 22; Herbert of Bosham, *Vita S. Thomae*, in *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury*, III, ed. J. C. Robertson, Rolls Series, 67 (London, 1877), 461; and John of Salisbury, *Ep.* 231, in *The Letters of the John of Salisbury*, ed. W. Miller and C. N. L. Brooke, II: *The Later Letters (1163–1180)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 418. We are grateful to Peter Godman for these references.

[7] See Venetia Bridges, "'Goliardic' Poetry and the Problem of Historical Perspective: Medieval Adaptations of Walter of Châtillon's Quotation Poems," *Medium Aevum* 81 (2012): 61–82.

demonstrate that Latin, the authoritative, written, didactic language, could and did partake of the oral and proverbial qualities more often associated with the vernaculars. This blurs the familiar binary between "oral vernacular" and "written Latin." Closer examination of the interactions and intersections of the languages always makes the dividing line between a *latin* and an *english* (so appealingly neat and tidy) appear much less clear or stable.

This instability is a point that scholars are increasingly emphasizing. Ralph Hanna sees the boundary between English and Latin as "a particularly fluid and perturbed linguistic frontier," arguing that studying Middle English texts in their manuscript context "quite definitively rebuffs" the idea of a "growth of an English vernacular literary consciousness," exclusive of the other languages of England.[8] Hanna's study of Lambeth Palace MS 260 shows many instances at which English and Latin appear "functionally interchangeable," interwoven in such a way that even presenting the linguistic relationship "as one of bilingualism distorts and simplifies the record."[9] The following discussion examines this blurry linguistic boundary congruently with another equally "perturbed" frontier: that between the oral and the written. Proverbs, spoken and written, in English and Latin, occupy both these hinterlands and force us to reconsider and to add nuance to assumptions too readily and conveniently relied upon concerning the relationship between the two languages.

This article focuses on the collection of *latinitates* in a particular grammatical miscellany: Cambridge, St. John's College, MS F.26. It is the first full study of this small proverb collection,[10] which it uses as a case study to consider the relationship between the *latin* and the *english* more widely: a relationship that raises not only questions about authority, vernacularity, textuality, orality, and pedagogy, but also that ancient question, "where is wisdom to be found?"[11]

St. John's MS F.26 is a collection of booklets, bound together and

[8] Hanna, "Lambeth Palace Library, MS 260, and the Problem of English Vernacularity," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 3rd series, 5 (2008): 131–32.

[9] Ibid., 138, 140.

[10] A discussion and edition of a comparable bilingual proverb collection in another manuscript is W. A. Pantin, "A Medieval Collection of Latin and English Proverbs and Riddles, from the Rylands Latin MS 394," *The Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 14 (1930): 81–114.

[11] Job 28:12: "sapientia vero ubi invenitur et quis est locus intellegentiae?" All biblical citations and translations are from the Douai-Rheims Vulgate Bible, stable URL http://www.drbo.org/ (accessed May 2013).

wrapped in its original thick vellum cover.[12] It has been described in detail by David Thomson's *A Descriptive Catalogue of Middle English Grammatical Texts*, which postulates that "it was put together in a school."[13] Its contents are diverse and numerous, and they have been listed fully by Thomson; but in brief, they include several grammatical treatises (on the length of vowels, on preterites and supines, on heteroclite nouns, and on orthography), a glossary of Latin words, a poem on cockfighting, Thomas Sylton's *De Accentu*, a baccalaureate exercise, the *Distichs of Cato*, verses on St. Nicholas, the beginning of the *Schola Salernitas*, legal formulae, a note on place-names, Alexander de Villa-Dei's *Doctrinale*, the *Promptorium Parvulorum* (the first English-Latin dictionary), and several short verses, some grammatical, some admonitory. On a single folio (44^{r-v}), it includes a collection of English and Latin proverbs, translations in and out of both languages (see plates 1 and 2).[14] In the manuscript's current form, they appear just before the *Distichs*, but the three pages immediately preceding and one following fol. 44 have been lost. They range from moral counsel ("pride goþ before and shame comeþ after" [*Stevenson*, 6, 1882]), to practical advice ("many hondyn make lyht werke" [*Whiting*, H62], "in dok and out nettyl" [*Whiting*, D288]), to worldly wise observations ("be gold nere so red for bred it must go" [*Whiting*, G307], "lordes loue is non herytage"). Some are biblical ("blessyþ be þe rod þat chastysyþ þe chyld" [*Stevenson*, 8, 344]), some social ("who so lackyth mony he lackyþ his frend"), and some practical ("I say wyt owte bost smoke shendet rost").[15]

[12] See Daniel Wakelin, "The Carol in Writing: Three Anthologies from Fifteenth-Century Norfolk," *Journal of the Early Book Society* 9 (2006): 42, n. 37.

[13] Thomson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 156 (see 148–57).

[14] The two sides of this folio are plates 1 and 2. The hand is unclear in several places, and the Latin is obscure and heavily abbreviated. After we consulted with Professor Philip Ford, we recognized that producing a full transcription to accompany this article would not be feasible. Rather than including a partial transcription, we have chosen to reproduce images of the two pages as plates.

[15] Cambridge, St. John's College, MS F.26, fol. 44^{r-v}. All proverbs quoted from this collection are from these two pages. Where they exist, reference numbers are given from the following proverb dictionaries: B. Stevenson, *Stevenson's Book of Proverbs, Maxims and Familiar Phrases* (London: Routledge, 1949); B. J. Whiting and H. W. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings mainly before 1500* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1968); and W. W. Skeat, *Early English Proverbs, Chiefly of the 13th and 14th Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910). Other useful dictionaries of medieval proverbs are Jon R. Stone, *The Routledge Dictionary of Latin Quotations: The Illiterati's Guide to Latin Maxims, Mottoes, Proverbs and Sayings* (New York: Routledge, 2005); and M. P. Tilley, *A Dictionary of Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950).

The date and provenance of this manuscript have been a source of debate. In her *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts c. 737–1600 in Cambridge Libraries*, P. R. Robinson dated fols. 25–49 to "c. 1439," based on a form of obligation or quitclaim written by Thomas Marchall on fol. 25^{r}, which mentions "anno regni regis Henrici sexti post conquestum septimodecimo" (the seventeenth year of the reign of King Henry the Sixth after the Conquest);[16] and Thomson concurs with this opinion.[17] Thomas Marchall wrote the two booklets that comprise fols. 25–49 (which Thomson labels Sections C and D) in a "fairly neat mixed bookhand, with various display scripts, [and] occasional attempts at secretary":[18] a hand consistent with a date of c. 1439. However, Richard Beadle has taken issue with dating these folia on this obligation, arguing that "documentary materials found as it were 'out of context' have traditionally been treated with caution as sufficient evidence for dating the manuscripts where they are occasionally found" and that "the scribe's cue or motive for adding the document was unknown—it is possible that he merely wanted a note of a standard formula, and, working rather later, chose one dated 1439 at random."[19] It may be the case, as M. R. James's 1913 catalogue of the St. John's manuscripts suggests, that these booklets were compiled in the late fifteenth century.[20] Certainly it is likely that the manuscript as a whole was compiled over a number of years and not assembled in its current form until somewhat later.

Thomas Marchall signs himself "of Todyngton," now in Bedfordshire; and Thomson suggests that "an origin in this part of the country" would make it likely "that the grammatical exercises which are associated in the manuscript with St Nicholas are examples of the requirements for the baccalaureate at St Albans." He notes that a certain John Marchall witnessed a deed connected with the abbey at St. Albans in 1455 and may be the same person mentioned by Thomas Marchall in his legal note. A John and a Thomas Marchall are known to have been monks at

[16] The translation of the Latin here, and in subsequent instances where no other modern translation is cited and the medieval translation is not being discussed, is our own.

[17] Robinson, *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts c. 737–1600 in Cambridge Libraries*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Brewer, 1988), 1, 87, no. 303.

[18] Thomson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 148.

[19] Beadle, "Dated and Datable Manuscripts in Cambridge Libraries," in *English Manuscript Studies, 1100–1700*, 3, ed. Peter Beal and Jeremy Griffiths (London: British Library, 1992), 240–41.

[20] James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of St. John's College Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 194, no. 163.

St. Albans, and a John Marchall was also a schoolmaster there around 1500.[21] The St. Albans localization, if correct, may indicate a specialized purpose for the proverb collection on fol. 44: to attain the dignity of bachelor, students at St. Albans had to compose verses, letters, and a *rithmus* on the subject of a proverb specified by the master.[22]

Another manuscript, Cambridge University Library, MS Additional 2830, offers a very good comparison to F.26. It too is a grammatical miscellany, and it contains many similar items: grammatical expositions, verses, and treatises (for example, on the changes made to syllables when compounded, on heteroclite nouns, on defective nouns, and on the declension of Greek words in Latin), tracts by John Leylond and John Drury, the *Summa Penitencie*, and, importantly, several collections of *latinitates*, both with and without their English translations, for Michaelmas, Christmas, and Easter terms 1434–35. This manuscript is mostly in the hand of a scribe who identifies himself as Hardgrave of Beccles (his signature appears frequently, as on fol. 52^{v}: "Explicit Dominus que pars secundum vsum Magistri de Beccles. Quod hardgrave de eadem villa"). The manuscript can be securely dated to 1434–35 (very close to the 1439 date posited for F.26); and it can be located to the school at Beccles in north Suffolk, where John Drury, a pupil of John Leylond, was a master.[23] Beadle has also located the scribal dialect to the Norfolk area.[24]

The *latinitates* in CUL MS Add. 2830 reveal the distinctiveness of the collection found in F.26. CUL Add. 2830 contains four sets of proverbial translation sentences, announced by large textura or rubricated headings, such as "Incipiunt latinitates de termino pascalis domini anno supradicto" (Here begin the latinitates for Easter term of the aforesaid year of our Lord [f. 100^{r}: see plate 3]).[25] Not all of them have their English translations, but for those that do, the Latin is clearly the original. These collections of *latinitates* represent the form that a straightforward, unidirectional, and pedagogical exercise might take.

[21] Thomson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 156–57.

[22] Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1973), 101.

[23] For a full description of this manuscript, see Thomson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 169–78, and Robinson, *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts*, I, 40, no. 84. For more on the school at Beccles, see Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages*, 118; and Orme, *Medieval Schools: From Roman Britain to Renaissance England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 112–15, 141, and 183.

[24] Beadle, "Prolegomena to a Literary Geography of Later Medieval Norfolk," in *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts*, ed. Felicity Riddy (Cambridge: Brewer, 1991), 107.

[25] Cambridge University Library, MS Additional 2830, fol. 100^{r}.

In contrast, the collection in F.26 is inconspicuous and incomplete, as demonstrated by the comparison of the images of both manuscripts, supplied in the plates. It has no heading, no rubrication, and it trails off mid-sentence with the words "Omnibus est no."[26] Moreover, its translations are not unidirectional. Whereas in CUL Add. 2830, it is clear that the proverbs were set for translation from Latin to English, in F.26 the process seems much more fluid. The English appears above the Latin on the page, which might indicate that it was the original, and in several instances this seems to be the case. Yet sometimes the succinctness, meter, or internal rhyme of the Latin, set against the clumsily imitative English syntax, suggests the opposite:

ȝyf þu wylt be yn pece here see and sey ryht nowhte [*Stevenson*, 3, 1767]
Audi uide tace si uis uiuere in pace[.][27]

In the case of other proverbs, we know from their appearance elsewhere that the Latin came first, or at least existed independently:[28]

Blessyþ be þe rod þat chastysyþ þe chyld [*Stevenson*, 8, 344]
Infantem uirga castigans sit benedicta[.][29]

However, it is not at all clear from the layout of the page that one language had superiority over the other. If, as it seems, both languages served as the "original" for different proverbs at different points, the overall effect is one of total fluidity, in and out of translation, in both directions. And if the English syntax could be stilted in imitating the

[26] A fuller version of what we presume to be the same sentence appears on fol. 43^{v}: "Omnibus est notum quod multum diligo potum." This common Latin verse, meaning "It is known to all that I love to drink a lot," appears in several manuscripts, including Cambridge, St. John's College, MS N. 13; London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 210; and San Marino, Huntington Library, MS 137, among others. It appears both as a stand-alone annotation (often in flyleaves and margins) and a colophon with a number of standard responses (such as *Qui bona vina bibit Paradiso fortius ibit* and *Quando ego bibo vinum, loquitur mea lingua latinum*).

[27] In the translation's defense, the polysyndeton of *here see and sey* suggests that it was made with an eye for sound as well as sense.

[28] Orme comments on the rarity, in the grammatical manuscript tradition, of "cases in which the Latin was evidently the starting point, even though it was written second, and the aim was to teach . . . translation from Latin into English" (Orme, "Latin and English Sentences," 50). To find both happening at once, as we do in F.26, is very anomalous.

[29] This proverb also appears in Manchester, John Rylands Library MS Latin 394, fol. 26: the manuscript discussed by Pantin, "A Medieval Collection of Latin and English Proverbs and Riddles" (109). It appears to be loosely based on Proverbs 13:24 ("Qui parcit virgae odit filium suum; qui autem diligit illum instanter erudit," *He that spareth the rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him correcteth him betimes*, citation and translation from the DRBO, stable URL: http://www.drbo.org/), although the wording is dissimilar.

Latin concision and fluency, the effect could work in reverse. The first proverb in the collection is:

God leue it so be
Omnipotens dominus semper annuat omnia nobis[.]

The idiomatic simplicity of the English contrasts with the lengthy, weighty, Latin translation, so that the succinct axiom (a medieval rendition of *que sera, sera* perhaps) is amplified into a mini-exposition upon the omnipotence and benevolence of the Creator. The amplification undermines the implicit emphasis on the mystery of God's will in the English, offering instead a more robust elucidation of the workings of providence. This juxtaposition of registers plays differently on the strengths of the different languages: in this instance, the osmotic movement between *english* and *latin* highlights, rather than collapses, the different registers of simplicity and profundity they could embody: the one short and sweet, the other weighty and substantial. However, their apposition also highlights the parity of this difference. These are utterly different ways of expressing the *same thing*: wisdom in each language has a distinctive character but no less authority.

The contrasts in this collection are not only of linguistic register but also of the contextual character of the proverbial wisdom in each language (another sphere in which "vernacularity" is at stake). The collection balances expedient, prudential advice with "providential" wisdom, reflecting the very different origins and characters of what we loosely group together under the generic heading of "proverbs": attributed variously to biblical or classical authorities such as Solomon and Cato, or springing anonymously and collectively from a common repertoire of distilled axioms. Carefulness over commodity, for example, is advocated by several of the F.26 proverbs:

Who so lackyth mony he lackyþ his frend
Qui caret argento caruisse uidetur amico

To hym þat haþ hors me 3yuyþ hors,
And he þat haþ non xal on foot gon[30]
Sum possessor equi dabitur mihi tunc equester
Si priuatus equo tunc forte pedester[.]

[30] Perhaps echoing Matthew 13:12: "Qui enim habet, dabitur ei, et abundabit: qui autem non habet, et quod habet auferetur ab eo," *For he that hath, to him shall be given, and he shall abound: but he that hath not, from him shall be taken away that also which he hath* (citation and translation from the DRBO).

Yet others advocate liberality with possessions:

þat þat god doth þe sond ryht so þou it spede[31]
Expendias siquid deus ipse tibi dedit [id quit?]

These contrasting statements juxtapose thrift (a virtue) with parsimony (a vice): and behind this bifurcated presentation of the same quality is a bifurcated proverbial authority. Social pragmatism about cautious lending is brought into conflict with the gospel principle of generous giving: the inflection that the Latin translation placed on "God leue it so be," changing axiom into exposition, is felt in the dialogue that is established between these proverbs; or rather, the polyphony of contrary wisdoms that is generated by turning a *sawe* into an *english*.

It is, of course, proverbial that proverbs are mutually contradictory: *many hands make light work* versus *too many cooks spoil the broth*; or *absence makes the heart grow fonder* versus *out of sight, out of mind* (or "Selden y sawe is sone forȝete," as F.26's rendering has it [*Whiting*, S130]). But in this collection, these contrasting pieces of advice function chorically, glossing each other hermeneutically, just as they are themselves glossed in translation. As with "God leue it so be," where the plurality generated by the different characters of the *english* and the *latin* served not to undermine but to reinforce the wisdom they agreed upon, so this multiplicity is not necessarily a destabilizing force. A key principle of this eclectic collection is that it produces meaning polyvocally, drawing together the wisdom of the prophets and the ancients with that of the common stock of socially accumulated precepts.

Alongside the prudential/providential counsel there is a large amount of purely practical wisdom. "In dok and out nettyl" (*Whiting*, D288) is a proverb that highlights the strangeness of its journey from "empty jingle" to *latinitas*. Its catchiness as a spoken aphorism rests in its brevity and meter: the apposition of two spondaic units that stress *in* and *out*, *dok* and *nettyl*, and construct a simple, memorable, and rhythmical symmetry. In Latin this is rendered as two lines of prose, completely lacking the rhythmic pulse and mnemonic naturalness of the original English:

[31] The sense of the English here is difficult to gauge. The word is clearly *spede*, not *spende*, as might be expected from a translation of *expendias*. Perhaps this is an error, and the abbreviation mark that should indicate the graph *n* has accidentally been omitted. If this is the case, then an interpretation of the English would be: "that which God has [generously] sent you, you also ought to spend [generously]," i.e. an injunction toward charity. Defending a reading of *spede* is more complex: perhaps a sense of "to expedite wisely/prudently, to use to fulfil its proper purpose" is the most plausible.

Evola succede mordax vrtica recede
Exeat urtica veniat intus perodella[.][32]

The Latin is intricate and complex, in complete contrast to the pithiness of the English. The rarity of the words might also suggest that it served as a particularly challenging vocabulary test, in a humorous contrast to the extreme succinctness of its original. The difference made by the translation, as with "God leue it so be," is crucially not semantic; but it is nonetheless completely transformative. Excerpted from its normative, domestic, and oral context, the proverb-as-translation exercise, in this instance, becomes risible. The effect of translating these proverbs is to divest them of their idiomatic character and mnemonic structures, while preserving only their basic semantic skeleton: the things that are most characteristically oral are most alienated.

The distinctness of the *english* from its original oral proverb is fascinating, and it resides almost entirely in timbre. Although the words remain unchanged, the contextual transformation that occurs as these mnemonic jingles are collected, written down, anthologized, and then translated is vast. One of the particularly interesting consequences is the bifurcated authority generated by this confluence of registers. The result of fusing popular axioms with learned, pedagogical morality is not only a conflict of idiolect, but a polyvalency of authorities, combining the "prescriptive didactic" with the "indirect, experiential didactic," as Neal R. Norrick delineates them.[33] It brings two wisdoms (homespun and book-learned, folkloric and authoritative) into apposition; it transposes worldly wise pragmatism into the scholarly and morally improving context of the grammar school, and in so doing it shows the dramatic and surprising extent of the interpenetration of two languages and two traditions often lazily assumed to be mutually discrete.

Other proverbs whose advice is practical rather than moral, such as "þe nere þe bon þe swetter flesth" (*Stevenson*, 13, p. 832), "I say wytowte bost, smoke shendet rost," "3if þi voys be horse drynke þe same þat þe goos doth"—instructional maxims for knowing how to locate the best of the meat, keep a roast from being spoiled by smoke, and drink water rather than ale to appease a sore throat—seem the furthest removed from their original social/communal pedagogy in this new, scholarly,

[32] "Perodella" is the reading of the manuscript: we have been unable to verify its meaning but presumably it means "dock weed."

[33] Norrick, *How Proverbs Mean: Semantic Studies in English Proverbs* (New York: Mouton, 1985), 41.

and didactic context. Their inclusion in the F.26 collection inflects them with an alternative instructional priority: to teach Latin, not general life skills. But what was the effect of painstakingly taking the time to translate and anthologize a common or garden phrase, which would normally trip unthinkingly off the tongue? Surely it made students ponder the form and content of the adage in detail, deconstructing its elements in one language and reassembling them in another, replacing unconscious parroted reiteration with slow scrutiny.

However, one of the most interesting features of this collection, which again draws attention to the mutual slippage between English and Latin, oral and written, is that in some cases, the translations mimic the mnemonic features of the originals. An example is

fyrst a chyld crepyþ and after goth
primo puer repit et postea pergere capit[.]

The syntax of this is replicated exactly, which might at first glance suggest an unpracticed or unconfident translator. In Latin, however, the phrase alliterates in the repeated plosives, and the two halves of the unit are balanced further by the half-rhymes of *repit* and *capit*. The translator has gone to some effort to preserve (or improve upon) the oral features of the original. As teaching practice largely relied upon memorization, the facility with which vernacular jingles stuck in the memory was (in this case) not lost, but imitated and preserved, in translation. The oral and the written, the *english* and the *latin*, become interpenetrative as these mnemonic features are mimetically adopted and preserved across languages.

There is a further point to be made here: the importance of rhyme in medieval Latin (in strong contrast to the quantitative basis of classical Latin verse) is well known; the so-called "Goliardic" meter, or *vagantenstrophe*, which is found in verse collections throughout the later Middle Ages,[34] is perhaps the most obvious example. While the translator of this proverb has certainly imitated in Latin its English orality through the use of rhyme, he has also (intentionally?) brought a more Latinate and "literary" factor into play; the positioning of *repit* and *capit* is reminiscent of Leonine rhyme, a common feature of medieval Latin poetry.[35]

[34] Manuscripts such as Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 603 and Digby 166 are good examples of such collections: see A. G. Rigg, "Medieval Latin Poetic Anthologies (III)," *Mediaeval Studies* 41 (1979): 468–505.

[35] See for example the opening lines (ll. 1–4) of Bernard of Cluny's *De contemptu mundi*: "Hora novissima, tempora pessima sunt, vigilemus. / Ecce minaciter imminet arbiter ille supremus. / Imminet imminet ut mala terminet, æqua coronet, / Recta remuneret,

Here the styles of vernacular orality and Latin poetry resemble each other, even if only in passing. The *english* thus becomes part not just of a mimetic translation exercise but also of Latinate literary culture of the kind experienced in a pedagogical context.[36] This is still more apparent in another example:

selden ysawe is sone forȝete [*Whiting*, S130]
res rare visa procul est a mente recisa[.]

Here the Leonine rhyme is substituted for the sibilant pattern. This substitution, rather than simple imitation, means the *latin* does not merely mimic the *english*'s style and syntax but actively adapts the vernacular phrase into a recognizable Latin literary form. Similar reworking is also evident in a third example:

whan þu begyns a þyng þenk on þe ending [*Stevenson*, 1, p. 678]
Cum fine curas aliquas res cerne futuras[.]

Here the *english* rhymes "þyng" and "ending" have been multiplied into "curas . . . aliquas . . . futuras," alongside preservation of the alliteration of the *english* ("cum . . . curas . . . cerne").[37] In this instance, amplification of the *english* has led almost to stylistic absurdity; there is so much rhyme and alliteration that the sense of the words has become secondary or perhaps been made deliberately more pointed and playful, with a musing, whimsical rendering of "when concerned about the end, discern some future things." It is harder to tell here whether Latin rhyming habits are being evoked because of the similar rhyme in the vernacular phrase, but the position of the rhyming words (at the middle and end of the line) is at least suggestive of the possibility.

This stylistic imitation is intriguing, since it indicates that the process of transforming an *english* into a *latin* was not a "closed," mimetic one; rather than always simply imitating the *english*'s style, the *latin* sometimes adapts it subtly (or less subtly) for stylistic ends that are reminiscent of pedagogical Latin literary culture. In the pedagogical manuscript context of these proverbs, this is hardly surprising; what is interesting

anxia liberet, æthera donet," *De contemptu mundi Bernardus Morlanensis (sive Morlacensis sive Morvalensis sive Cluniacensis)*, Library of Latin Texts (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), stable URL: http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Results.aspx?qry=7c298368-aec7-4409-94d6-88ed600a4ff8&per=0 (accessed 2 November 2012).

[36] Many of the "Goliardic" poems are thought to have been connected with educational establishments: see for example C. J. McDonough, "Hugh Primas 18: A Poetic *Glosula* on Amiens, Reims, and Peter Abelard," *Speculum* 61 (1986): 806–35.

[37] We assume that *cum*, *curas*, and *cerne* were pronounced with hard /k/, although *cerne* may have had a soft *c* by this stage.

is the implicit recognition of stylistic similarity between the different languages, and the perception that such recondite refashioning was not only possible but appropriate for these humble *englishes*. This similarity connects the *english* and the *latin* more intricately; it blurs the distinction between oral and written, making the modern equation of "vernacular = oral" and "Latin = written" yet more problematic. These written (and hence "authorized") examples paradoxically bring home the pedagogical reality of Latin, also, as an oral language, acquired through listening as much as reading in the early stages, and thus possessing a much greater aural affinity to vernacular proverbs than might be imagined.

These examples from F.26 show that the movement from English to Latin, from "proverbial" to "authoritative" wisdom, was not, at least straightforwardly, a hierarchical shift from "low" oral and vernacular to "high" Latin literary culture. Despite the occasional imitation of common "Goliardic" rhyme, which was not a prestigious metrical form like the hexameter, in literary terms the Latin of the proverbs is for the most part inelegant and less concise than the English. This suggests that the Latin came second, though it is difficult to say for certain. In most cases, the English appears to have been the original: and this is corroborated by the fact that most of these proverbs appear in Whiting's *Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings mainly before 1500*. However, the fact that one example, "Infantem uirga castigans sit benedicta," is also attested in another manuscript proverbs collection (Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS Latin 394, as discussed above) shows that the general order of English above, Latin below, is not a reliable indication that the English always came first, further troubling the idea that the relationship between the two languages was straightforwardly hierarchical.[38] It is troubled yet further by the evident focus on aural effects across the board: the people who constructed, copied, and trans-

[38] Other *latinitates* collections suggest that the normal mode was Latin first, English second: "When the Latin sentence is placed first, one presumes that it was the starting point and that the following English translation was usually added to help the master explain the Latin or was written down by the pupil as an aid to his own understanding. The English translations were usually added in a random and unsystematic way. . . . Most translation from Latin to English in schools was probably done orally, and the systematic writing down of English translations beneath Latin originals was slow to develop" (Orme, "Latin and English Sentences," 49). He then goes on to discuss the more anomalous cases "in which the English sentence comes first and a Latin translation second," commenting that they are more frequently "well-known proverbs or fragments of popular songs which evidently originated before the Latin." In these cases, Orme speculates, "The Latin equivalents may either represent the master's model translations . . . or the pupil's own efforts" (50).

lated these *englishes* and *latinitates* did so with an ear for sound as well as sense. Turning the *sawe* into the *english* involved a significant gesture back toward the original oral function and context, in the euphony of their equivalent *latin*.

This discussion has maintained that the choice of proverbs in these manuscript collections was deliberate; in fact, that they were sites where the "empty jingle" could fuse productively, playfully, and intricately with the wisdom of the ages. This begs the question, however, of the purpose of this little collection: was it purely or primarily pedagogical, the arduous task of translation sweetened by its eclectic contrasts of subject and tone? Was it more self-consciously literary in its intelligent and intricate linguistic acrobatics? Paremiologists frequently suggest that proverbs were chosen as translation sentences with the aim "of teaching *mores*":[39] Orme, for instance, holds that the primary purpose of *latinitates*, besides "the teaching of Latin grammar and vocabulary," was "to train the pupils in ethics and behavior";[40] and certainly to a large extent this must be the case. The *Distichs of Cato* begin with an explicitly moral pedagogical imperative:

Cum animaduertum, quam plurimos grauiter in uia morum errare, succurrendum opinioni eorum et consulendum famae existimaui, maxime ut gloriose uiuerent et honorem contingerent. Nunc te, fili karissime, docebo, quo pacto morem animi tui conponas.

[When I noticed how very many go seriously wrong in their manner of living I concluded that I must apply a corrective to their belief and take counsel of the experience of mankind in order that they may live most gloriously and attain honor. Now I will teach thee, dearest son, in what way thou mayest fashion a rule for thy life.][41]

However, Egbert of Liège's methodology for selecting his "empty jingles" demonstrates that the motivation behind the selection of proverbs could also be more complex; and CUL MS Add. 2830, in fact, suggests that it could be precisely the opposite: that rather than choosing dull proverbs to instill moral instruction as a collateral by-product of attaining Latin fluency, bawdier proverbs were often picked to make the painstaking task of translation more diverting:[42]

[39] Marjorie Curry Woods and Rita Copeland, "Classroom and Confession," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 382.

[40] Orme, "Latin and English Sentences," 51.

[41] Wayland Johnson Chase, ed. and trans., "The Distichs of Cato: A Famous Medieval Textbook," *University of Wisconsin Studies in the Social Sciences and History* 7 (1922): 12–13.

[42] The example of the Oxford schoolmaster John Cornwall corroborates this, who

I saw a nakyd man gaderin stoonys in hys barn.

I saw þe drunkyn whil þu were sobere.

Myn ars comyng to scole xal be betyn.[43]

Thys man haþ drunkyn hese legges a sonder & stagert as a goos.[44]

In this manuscript, the Latin did serve as the original; and as Orme points out, these *englishes* offer "humorous examples of the way in which Latin is *not* to be translated."[45] "I saw þe drunkyn whil þu were sobere," for instance, is a translation of "Ego vidi te ebrius dum fuisti sobrius," which should more properly translate "I, being drunk, saw you when you were sober." Orme suggests that they might even be "deliberately inaccurate," designed to illustrate "the importance of following Latin agreement rather than word order."[46] These proverbs appear immediately beneath the large textura heading, "Incipiunt Parue Latinitates de Termino Natalis domini sed non pro forma Reddicionis Anno domini 1434" (fol. 97^{r}), and there is apparently no sense in which their subject matter was considered inappropriate or incongruous beside the earnest, weighty heading. On the following page (fol. 97^{v}), the final *latinitas* gives the distinct impression of not being a proverb at all, but a tidbit of incidental autobiographical information on the part of the hungry, weary translator:

I haue drynkyn today many dyuers alis
Ego bibi hodie multam serviciam diuersam, gustus & gusta[.][47]

To this, a different hand writing in a lighter ink ironically (and, one imagines, grumpily) adds the sentence, "I haue eaten nothing this longe tyme"; and then, leaving a gap where the Latin translation of this sentence should be, another idling observation, in a third hand and a still lighter ink, "I haue a lytle paper in my booke" (*Ego habeo papyrum . . . in libro meo*). This collection, for all that the layout of its multiple col-

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"based his *latinitates* on matters of everyday life to give them greater appeal, such as the wars of Edward III with the French, which were going on at the time" (Orme, "Latin and English Sentences," 47).

43 Compare with "Betwyx two stolys fals þe ars down" (*Inter scanna duo concidit anus ruina*), in the collection in Beinecke Library MS 3 (34): see Orme, "Latin and English Sentences," 56.

44 Cambridge UL MS Additional 2830, fol. 97^{r}.

45 Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 112.

46 Orme, "Latin and English Sentences," 51.

47 The words "gustus & gusta" do not have English equivalents.

lections of *latinitates* appears much more formal, planned, and conventional, has a very different governing ethic in its selections.

The choice of the proverbs of F.26 seems to sit somewhere in the middle of these two models—perhaps closer to Orme's posited "second concern," "the portrayal of everyday life, speech and humor, which would be familiar to the pupil and entice him to learn by amusing him."[48] The translator does not abandon the moral motive in his pedagogy, prioritizing the successful acquisition of Latin at any cost over the expense of the inculcation of preceptive morality; neither does he adopt the explicitly homiletic style of the *Distichs*. The moral compass of this collection is dominated by social, natural, or domestic realities. "In good nesh wastell be no þystyll" compares integrity to a soft dough in which there are no thorns; "short hosyn aske long layens"[49] suggests that cutting corners in one aspect will necessitate compensating in another; "better is a bred in hond þan in wod" (*Stevenson*, 2, p. 181) implies that being content with one's possessions is better than hankering after things one does not have.

Jill Mann holds that

> the force of a proverb . . . derives in the last resort from its appeal to experience; even if it is a particular system of thought or belief that throws up an axiom or exhortation in the first place, its proverbial form assumes its enfranchisement from such a system, its transfer to a realm where its only support is the speaker's willingness to match it with experience.[50]

These manuscript proverb collections allow us to glimpse the surprising trajectory not just from English to Latin, but also of the oral proverb (whose domain and authority are experiential and social) to the written *english* (whose domain and authority are learned and written). A simplistic way of thinking about this would assume that in this progression from oral to written and from *english* to *latin*, these proverbs were entering the hortatory, learned, and authoritative tradition, becoming hallowed in the same pages as the *Distichs*, partaking of their canonical status. However, the reality that the pages of F.26 present is more nuanced. The movement is not unidirectional; nor do the functions of the *english* and the *latin* corroborate frequent assumptions about their status and relationship. The collection in F.26 demonstrates instead how genu-

[48] Orme, "Latin and English Sentences," 51.

[49] We interpret *layen* as *langet*, "a thong for tying hose" (*MED*), which would correspond with the translation *ligulas*. "Schort hos, long lanȝars" also appears among the *latinitates* of Beinecke Library MS 3 (34): see Orme, "Latin and English Sentences," 56.

[50] Mann, "Proverbial Wisdom in the *Ysengrimus*," *New Literary History* 16 (1984): 93.

inely dialogic is the conversation between languages and between "traditions." It represents a flexible space where the cultures of vernacular sagacity and Latin pedagogy, the demotic and the academic, the wisdom of the world and of the written word, comment freely, fluidly, and equally upon one another.

An interesting counterpart to this is to compare the same proverbs that appear in F.26 with their inclusion in literary collections, such as *The Proverbs of Hendyng*, a poem written between 1272 and 1307 containing the sayings of "wyse Hendyng . . . Þat wes Marcolues sone."[51] The poem is composed of forty rhyming sextets, concluding with popular proverbs and capped with the formula "Quoþ Hendyng." One proverb that the poem shares with F.26 is "Better is an appyl yȝoue þan yȝete" (*Restat poma dari melius quam dente uorari*) (*Skeat*, 74):

> 3ef þou hauest bred & ale,
> Ne put þou nout al in þy male,
> Þou del hit sum aboute.
> Be þou fre of þy meeles,
> Wher-so me eny mete deles,
> Gest þou nout wiþ-oute.
> 'Betere is appel yȝeue þen y-ete';
> Quoþ Hendyng.[52]

The recontextualization of the proverb in this text represents a different kind of trajectory from oral to written culture, especially as the poem itself was presumably recited or read aloud more often than it was read privately. As in F.26, the difference made by this recontextualization is not semantic: the meaning of the proverb is not radically altered by Hendyng's injunctions to be generous with food in the preceding poetic gloss. However, its authority is wrested from the anonymity of popular consensus and attributed to a named authority figure, making it no longer a communal apothegm belonging anonymously to everybody, but a piece of learned wisdom partaking of the hierarchies of a poetic/

[51] "The Proverbs of Hendyng," in *Specimens of Early English*, ed. R. Morris and W. W. Skeat (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872), part 2, lines 2–3, 35. The poem appears in ten manuscripts, often in incomplete or excerpted form (sometimes only a stanza or a couplet appears), as might be expected for what is essentially a versified proverb anthology. The manuscripts are: Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College 351/568; Cambridge, Pembroke College, 100; Cambridge, St. John's College, 145; Cambridge, University Library, Additional 4407; Cambridge, University Library, Gg.I.1; Durham Cathedral, Dean and Chapter Library, B.I.18; London, British Library, Harley 2253; London, British Library, Harley 3823; London, British Library, Royal 8.E.xvii; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 86.

[52] Ibid., ll. 95–102, p. 38.

axiomatic tradition. This, far more than the translation into Latin in F.26, alters and reattributes the nature of this proverb's authority.

The same is true of "þe brennyd hond dredyth þe fyre" (*Skeat*, 268),[53] which appears in the twenty-fourth stanza of *Hendyng*:

> Drah þyn hond sone aȝeyn
> 3ef men þe doþ a wycke þeyn,
> Þer þyn ahte ys lend;
> So þat child wiþ-draweþ is hond
> From þe fur & þe brond,
> Þat haþ byfore bue brend.
> 'Brend child fur dredeþ';
> Quoþ Hendyng.[54]

Here the difference made to the proverb when attributed to the learned authority figure, compared to when it anonymously belonged to a shared written repertoire, is more pronounced. The poem explicitly states that it is children who must be wary of putting their hands in the fireplace, extrapolating its more abstracted instruction to adults, to be cautious in trusting a second time when disappointed the first. In the poem, "Brennyd hond" is replaced by "brend child"; but in the schoolbook, the proverb does its own extrapolation. Where the poem offers the persona of an authoritative speaker, the F.26 collection is more subtle. As an *english*, it appeals to a less prescriptive authority, the universal experience of burning one's hand, rather than the "wyse" handing down instruction to the many; as a *poem*, ironically, it assumes all the didactic and hierarchic authority of a learned and named pedagogue.

F.26 includes other proverbs about children, such as "it is better chidryn to wepe þan olde men" (*Whiting*, C199) and the aforementioned biblical exhortation, "blessyþ be þe rod þat chastysyþ þe child" (Proverbs 13:24; *Stevenson*, 8, 344). It includes both children and adults in the fabric of the social wisdom it collates, appealing, as Mann argued, to an experiential attestation for the veracity of its wisdom rather than placing it in the mouth of an authority figure. In this last instance, in fact, the proverb in F.26 is intentionally removed from its original (supremely) authoritative context, in the biblical book of Proverbs, and engages in the same dialogic, democratic parity that characterizes the whole collection.

[53] "Bornt hand fyr dreydis" also appears among the *latinitates* of Beinecke Library MS 3 (34): see Orme, "Latin and English Sentences," 56.

[54] "The Proverbs of Hendyng," ed. Morris and Skeat, ll. 178–85, p. 40.

Another poetic proverb anthology, *The Proverbs of Alfred* (written in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century), shows a similar process of increased "authorization" at work, again, much more so in the English poem than in the bilingual schoolbook. It includes a verse very similar to the one that begins the verso of fol. 44 in F.26:

Many man syngyþ whan he home bryngeth	Mony mon singeþ
hys newe weddyd wyf	Þat wif hom bryngeþ;
Wyst he what he home brouht	Wiste he hwat he broughte
Wepe he wold all his lyue	Wepen he mythe.[55]
(F.26)	(*Skeat*, 78)

This verse appears, as in *Hendyng*, at the end of a stanza in which Alfred offers wisdom on choosing a wife not "by hire wlyte" (her beauty) or "for never none þinge / Þat heo to þe bryngeþ," but for her "custe" (her qualities or character). The proverb is assimilated within the metrical structure: the opening two lines comprise two dactyls, appropriate for the initially joyful subject matter: "móny mon / síngeþ Þat / wíf hom / brýngeþ." The transition to the steady trochees of the third line, depicting in slow and meticulous units the miserable conclusion of the foolish nuptials, is a clever one. Here the proverb has undergone a different kind of transformation, assimilated completely into the poetry, such that sound becomes mimetic of sense. In F.26, these lines exhibit the same metrical pattern, but it is less insistent. In the immediate context of Alfred's precautionary caveats, between a verse advising cautious lending and another on how men give to the rich, this verse on choosing a wife is situated within the same commodity-ethic that determines happiness and misery. In contrast, the polyvalency of F.26 allows the verse to function more ambiguously. Situated instead between the enigmatic statement "Whan y leue my þynge þan am y leuyng, whan y aske þe my thynge, þan am y loþyng. Louyng loþyng leue me no thyng," and the gritty socio-economic verdict that "To hym þat haþ hors me 3yuyþ hors, And he þat haþ none xal on foot gon," the verse on unhappy marriage seems a more general comment about the state of the world and the inevitability of loneliness and regret than it does a misogynistic condemnation.

[55] "The Proverbs of Alfred," in *Old and Middle English: An Anthology*, ed. Elaine Treharne (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), ll. 263–66, p. 364. This poem is preserved in six manuscripts (some predictably only containing fragments of the text): Cambridge, Trinity College, B.14.39; London, British Library, Additional 11579; London, British Library, Cotton Galba A.xix; Maidstone, Maidstone Museum, A.13; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 86; and Oxford, Jesus College, 29.

Counterintuitively, in this pedagogic, Latinate context, these proverbs appear *less* prescriptive. Their proximity to the *Distichs* and their apparent recontextualization from the oral to the written, from the demotic to the didactic, in fact appear more as an apposition than a juxtaposition. Just as students had to exert mental effort to translate the meaning and timbre of one language into another, so locating the meaning of the proverbs themselves requires an active, concentrated effort in this dialogic bilingual context.

Many attempts have been made to define what exactly a proverb is. Paremiologists have asserted variously that their purpose is to "suggest a scheme of life";[56] that they are "strategies for dealing with situations" and "designed for consolation or vengeance, for admonition or exhortation, for foretelling."[57] They have been subdivided into "true proverbs, proverbial phrases, and sententious remarks";[58] categorized as *sentences* (attributed to a named authority figure), *proverbes* (usually anonymous), and *sawès* (common sayings);[59] and they have (proverbially) been called "one man's wit and all men's wisdom."[60] All these definitions concentrate on the *bifurcated* nature of proverbial wisdom, which belongs simultaneously to the *vox populi* and the *vox auctoritatis*. Most written collections of proverbs are credited to authority figures: Cato or Solomon, Alfred or Hendyng. Yet their dominance in oral culture was universal and anonymous: in fact, it is their disassociation from the *auctoritas* and their place in a shared cultural repertoire on which their authority rests.

Curiously, this is also where the proverbial wisdom can be found in the transformation of vernacular proverbs into Latin translation sentences. The originally experiential pedagogy of the spoken maxim, transposed into the didactic pedagogy of the schoolroom, produces a hybrid authority: oral and written, *english* and *latin*. The pedagogic voice that emerges in the collection of F.26 is neither purely didactic, as in the *Distichs* or the proverb-poems, nor purely demotic. It preserves the fea-

[56] Morton Bloomfield, "Understanding Old English Poetry," *Annuale Mediaevale* 9 (1968): 17.

[57] Kenneth Burke, "Literature as Equipment for Living," in *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action* (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), 261 and 234.

[58] B. J. Whiting, "The Nature of the Proverb," *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* 14 (1932): 273.

[59] Betty Bowden, "Ubiquitous Format? What Ubiquitous Format? Chaucer's *Tale of Melibee* as a Proverb Collection," *Oral Tradition* 17 (2002): 183.

[60] Lord John Russell, cited in Archer Taylor, "The Wisdom of Many and the Wit of One," in *The Wisdom of Many: Essays on the Proverb*, ed. Wolfgang Mieder and Alan Dundes (New York: Garland, 1981), 3.

tures that were the life of the proverb's orality, even mimicking them in translation. In choosing sentences from the vernacular repertoire, the people who assembled and translated this collection go further than Egbert of Liège, whose reasoning was that the "empty jingles" could at least be put to some use. These proverbs constitute an independent collection, rivalling and preceding the abridged *Distichs* in their particular manuscript context. They fuse the experiential wisdom of the hearth and marketplace with the preceptive wisdom of canonical texts, framing the counterpoised pedagogical objectives of teaching grammar and teaching *mores* within a new linguistically and socially hybrid form.[61]

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[61] This article owes a large debt of thanks to Philip Ford, late Professor of French and Neo-Latin at the University of Cambridge. Without his generous assistance with the transcription of the manuscript, as well as his expertise in interpreting it, this discussion would have been greatly impoverished. He will be missed.

We are also grateful to St. John's College, Cambridge, and Cambridge University Library for allowing us to reproduce images of manuscripts in their collections.

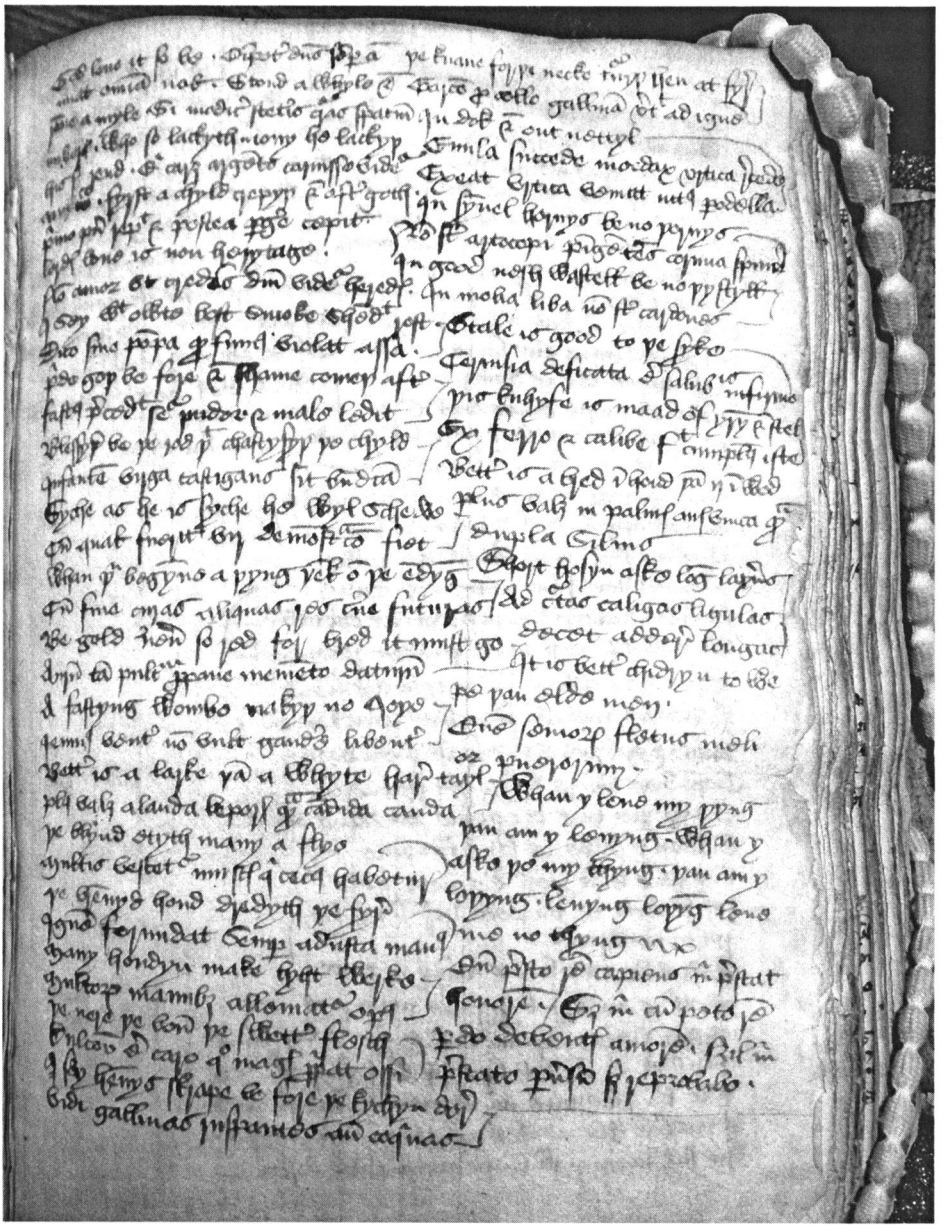

Plate 1. *Cambridge, St. John's College, MS F.26, f. 44r (the first page of the proverbs). Reproduced by permission of the Master and Fellows of St. John's College, Cambridge.*

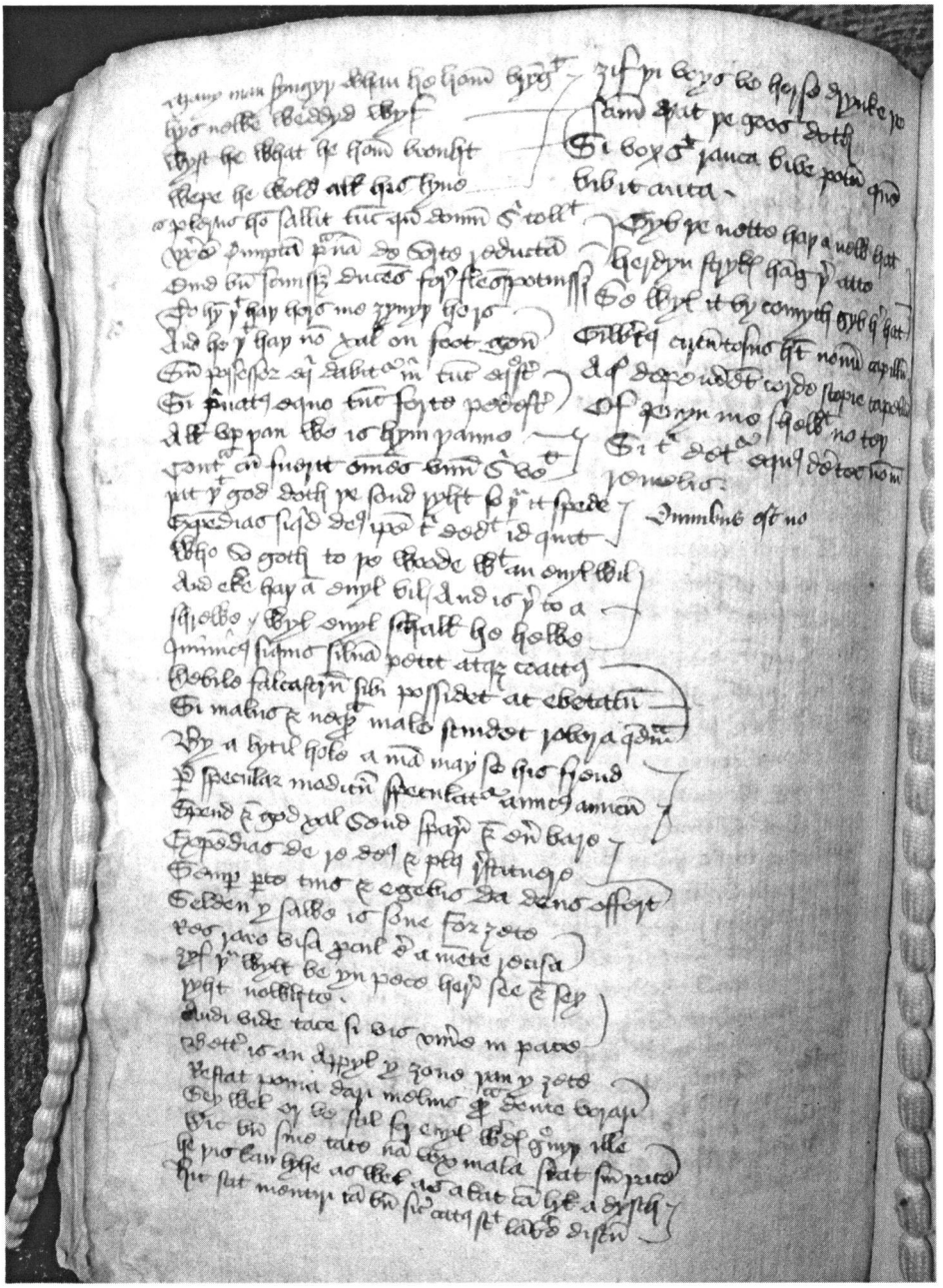

Plate 2. *Cambridge, St. John's College, MS F.26, f. 44v (the second page of the proverbs). Reproduced by permission of the Master and Fellows of St. John's College, Cambridge.*

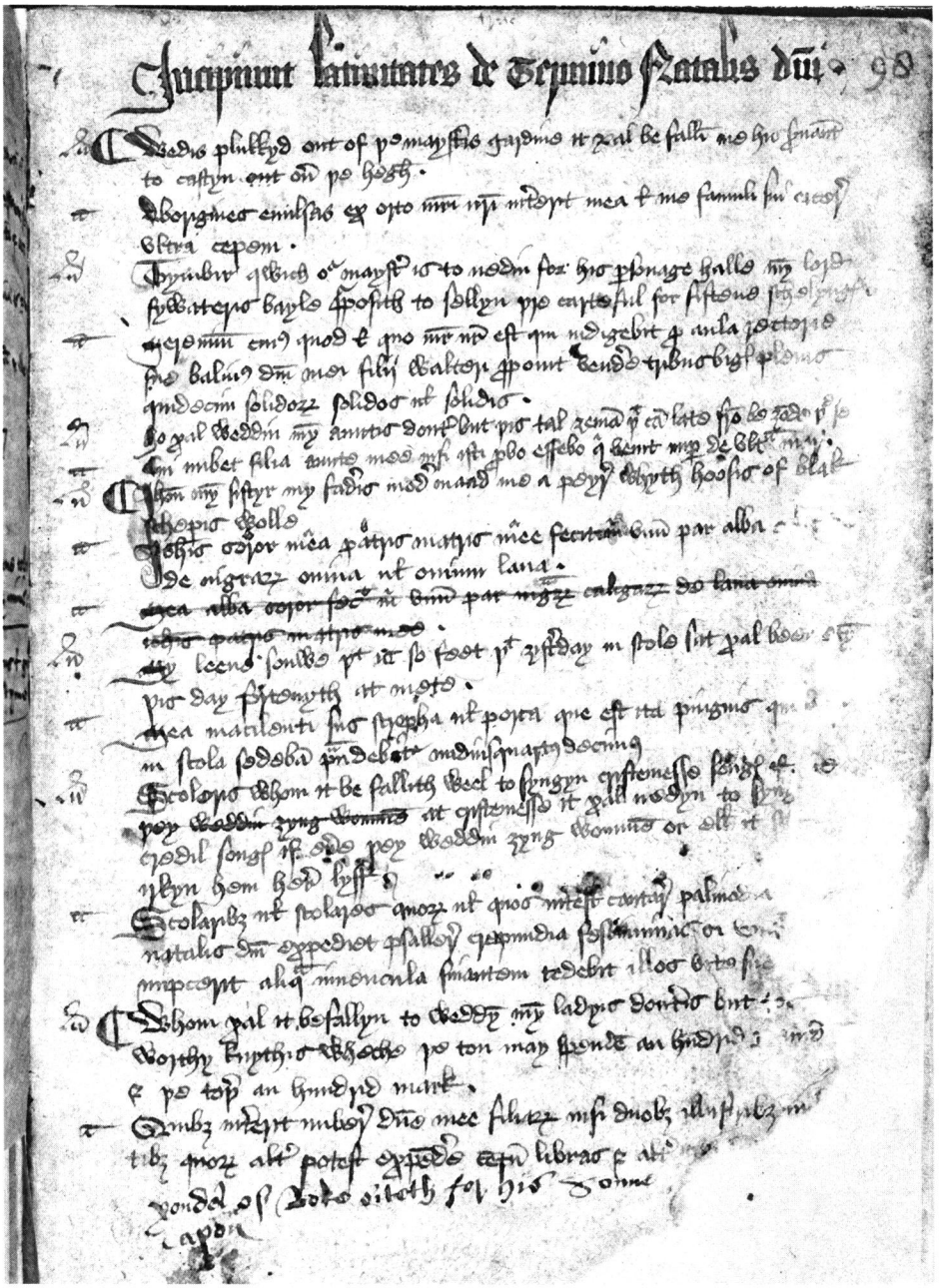

Plate 3. *Cambridge, University Library MS Additional 2830, f. 98r* (latinitates *for Christmas term 1434).*

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